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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7397
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 1753
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN IMMEDIATE 0131
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 2343
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 3311
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/11/2019
TAGS: EFIS KSCA PREL SENV IWC JA
SUBJECT: JAPAN RECEPITIVE TO FURTHER ENGAGEMENT ON WHALING

Classified By: DCM James P. Zumwalt, reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: U.S. representative to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Monica Medina met with senior officials from the Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ) November 4 to discuss progress in negotiations under the Future of the IWC process. The FAJ Director General described the results of recent talks in Santiago as a "major step forward" and said political level consultations on whaling are necessary following the recent change in administration in Japan. He defended Japan's proposal to base future reductions in numbers on current catch quotas rather than the actual number of whales taken in past years. He added that Australia's proposal to phase out research whaling is a non-starter for Japan. He said a successful outcome in the vote on Greenland's proposal to take humpback whales and action by the U.S. and others on Japan's complaints against the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society would positively influence Japan's negotiating position in the Future of the IWC process. Ms. Medina said the USG is looking for creative solutions to the remaining issues facing the IWC and positive mention at the upcoming U.S.-Japan summit of both sides' commitment to finding a solution on whaling would be a good signal. End summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and U.S. representative to the International Whaling Commission Monica Medina met with senior Fisheries Agency of Japan officials to discuss the Future of the IWC process November 4 in Tokyo. In a morning meeting with Ms. Medina, Fisheries Agency of Japan Director General Machida said that while he expects difficult negotiations ahead, he wants the Future of the IWC process to succeed. According to Machida, political level consultations on whaling are necessary following the recent change in administration in Japan. However, he cautioned the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration shares the same fundamental position on whaling as the outgoing Liberal Democratic Party, including support for the resumption of commercial whaling and continued research whaling. He added that the two sides should not rush through the negotiations,

which could end up making it more difficult to reach consensus at next June's IWC annual meeting.

¶13. (C/NF) Ms. Medina said the USG understands there is no fundamental change in the GOJ position on whaling, but that the USG is looking for creative solutions to move the IWC forward as opposed to fundamental change. She added that the U.S. is committed to finding a solution over the next two to three months. She said she would advocate for including language on whaling in a summit statement following the meeting between the President and Prime Minister November 13. The statement would express the desire of both countries to work out remaining differences on whaling. Once negotiators have narrowed the issues, both sides could seek a political solution, she added.

¶14. (C/NF) Machida described the progress at the Support Group meeting in Santiago as a major step forward. However, he said there remain two major issues that need to be addressed. First, there is still no consensus on the proposals raised in Santiago even among the Support Group members, let alone the entire IWC. Second, the upper limit on catch quotas, especially a reduction in the limit for Japan's research whaling in the Southern Ocean, have yet to be negotiated. Regarding Japan's catch numbers, Machida said Australia's proposal to phase out research whaling is a non-starter for the GOJ. He added that the baseline for any reduction in Japan's research whaling should be the catch quota figures and not the actual number of whales caught.

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¶15. (C/NF) Ms. Medina replied that the catch quotas is the most important outstanding issue. She said the Santiago proposal calls for an overall reduction in catch numbers from all whaling nations over a ten year period, which would help in securing approval from Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. She said given the history of Japan's research whaling, and the increase in quota numbers in recent years, there is room for Japan to cut from the actual number of whales taken. A symbolic action by Japan, such as agreeing not to take fin whales this year, would be a good indicator to the rest of the IWC of Japan's commitment to reaching a solution. The USG would then work hard to make sure the EU and Australia do not block a compromise.

¶16. (C/NF) Machida said there are two factors outside the current Future of the IWC negotiations that influence Japan's negotiating position. First, a negative outcome in the vote at next year's IWC intersessional meeting on Greenland's proposal to catch ten humpback whales could derail the work of the Support Group. Greenland's proposal has the backing of the IWC's Scientific Committee and another rejection at the IWC plenary meeting could make the overall compromise being discussed impossible. Second, the violent protests by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) could limit the GOJ's flexibility in the negotiations. He said the Netherlands should have primary responsibility for taking action against the SSCS, but he appreciates the USG initiative to address the group's tax exempt status. He said action on the SSCS would be a major element for Japan in the success of the overall negotiations. Ms. Medina replied that she hopes to work out differences with the EU on Greenland's proposal on humpback whales prior to the March 2010 IWC intersessional meeting and include the issue in the overall agreement. Regarding the SSCS, she said she believes the USG can demonstrate the group does not deserve tax exempt status based on their aggressive and harmful actions.

¶17. (U) Ms. Medina cleared this cable subsequent to departing Tokyo.
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